



DAVID VONDRAN
CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

We're here to serve you

We've all heard the phrase "We're here to serve you" many times. These words may sound generic, but to us, they mean everything.

C & L Electric Cooperative was created to serve our community. Back in the day, neighbors banded together and formed our co-op for the common good. In our case, it was the only way the community could bring electricity to the area where there was none. In doing so, the co-op helped the community thrive. That mission-focused heritage is the golden thread that is woven throughout our history.

Today, we are continuing to power the community. While our focus has remained steady on providing affordable, reliable and responsible energy to our members, today's energy landscape and consumer expectations are far different than they were decades ago. That's why we're adapting — to keep pace with changing technology, evolving needs and new expectations.

Serving as your trusted energy partner means we want to help you save energy and money. We can offer information on a broad range of energy topics. Consider scheduling a free energy audit with one of our energy experts to identify ways you can save energy at home. Understanding how your home uses energy can help determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet.

If you're considering a solar installation, we would be happy to give you an unbiased view of the pros and cons. Investing in solar is a major decision, and it's important to fully understand the costs, responsibilities and potential energy savings. Unlike a solar company that has one objective — to sell their products and services — we will look at the total energy picture and help you determine the best options for your home. We understand that homeowners must conduct their due diligence, and we're here to help you through that process.

In a similar vein, we recognize that some members may be considering electric vehicle (EV) options. We can provide information on charging requirements for all types of EVs and ways to save on EV charging.

So, the next time you hear your co-op use the phrase "We're here to serve you," we want you to know that we mean it. Service is deeply ingrained in who we are. We continue to evolve with the times, and in return, we've found additional ways to serve you and provide more options for you to power your life.

We're here whenever you need us. Connect with us online, in person, by phone or our social media channels. However you choose to connect, please let us know how we can serve you better.



From maintaining rights-of-way for reliable power to providing you with ways to save on your electric bill, we're here to serve you!

Need assistance paying your electric bill?

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides help with paying cooling costs in summer months to qualifying individuals and families.

Beginning July 10, applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, as long as funds are available. Businesses are excluded from receiving the benefit.

Check eligibility at your local Community Action Agency (CAA) at acaaa.org.

LIHEAP is not administered by your local cooperative, but rather through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is operated by CAA.



Before jumping in *Safety tips for swimming season*

When using pools and hot tubs this summer, keep these electrical safety tips in mind.

- Keep all electronics plugged in at least 5 feet or further from pool or hot tub. Battery-powered electronics are a safer option.
- Always have a licensed contractor or electrician inspect wiring in the pool or hot tub to ensure it meets code requirements.
- Keep pool skimmers and other long metal tools more than 10 feet away from overhead power lines.
- Test your outdoor outlets once a month, and make sure they are all Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) protected.

- Never touch electrical devices when wet or in contact with wet surfaces.

Remember, water and electricity never mix! For more safety tips, visit safeelectricity.org.



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**Our office will
be closed on
Tuesday, July 4,
in observance of
Independence
Day.**

Stay one step ahead of utility scammers

BY PAUL WESSLUND

In 2021, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) received 5.7 million incident reports in the consumer marketplace. About half of those were identified as fraud and a quarter as identity theft. Those statistics don't tabulate utility fraud specifically, but the Better Business Bureau says it receives about 1,000 complaints of utility scams each year.

Let's look at a few common scenarios of utility scams:

- You receive a random call. The caller says you didn't pay your last electric bill, and your power will be cut off immediately — unless you pay right now by credit card over the phone. Caller ID shows it came from the utility; the caller even told you the exact amount of your most recent bill.
- You receive a text message that you overpaid your utility bill, and to get the refund, you need to provide your financial information.
- A friendly person in uniform knocks on your door saying he/she is from the electric co-op and is following up on high-bill complaints from your neighbors. He/she just needs to take a look at your utility bill to get the information code and make sure you aren't being double-charged.

These real-life stories are scams, and about one in four people fall victim to them.

While many people do the right thing and contact their cooperative rather than handing over money or private information, more than \$6 billion in losses to various scams were reported in 2021. According to Utilities United Against Scams, the typical cost for each victim who lost money was about \$500.

Beware of new schemes

Scammers are notorious for recognizing when people are most vulnerable — Christmas, right after a tornado, or during extreme hot or cold weather. They might be the most charming people you ever met. They might be the meanest and most intimidating, bullying you into acting. It can be hard to say "no" in the moment.

In one of the top recent scams, you're told to pay by gift or cash card, giving the swindlers the card and

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM UTILITY SCAMS



- Never give personal information to an unknown visitor or caller.
- Demands for payment by gift card or cryptocurrency should immediately raise red flags.
- When in doubt, call your electric co-op directly.

PIN number so they can have easier access to your money. C & L Electric will never ask you to pay by gift card.

Another new scheme tells you to pay your bill with cryptocurrency. We will not require you to pay by bitcoin or similar methods.

Call C & L Electric first

The best way to avoid being a victim of a utility scam is to call us at 870-628-4221. Scammers will try to rush you into acting, but no billing situation is so urgent you can't check on it.

If you do lose money on a scam, don't be embarrassed. Report it to us. File a complaint with the attorney general of Arkansas by calling 501-682-2007 or online at arkansasag.gov. The attorney general is responsible for investigating fraud and will want to know about any suspicious schemes.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.